

## Message Text

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11

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 AID-20 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /140 W

----- 018183

R 021700Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6126

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUOU

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0684

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DM, CG, PO

SUBJECT: MOBUTU'S TRAVELING CIRCUS VISITS DAHOMEY

1. PRESIDENT MOBUTU LEFT COTONOU MAY 2 AFTER A STATE VISIT OF SOME 48 HOURS. VISIT GOT OFF TO AWKWARD START WHEN ZAIRIAN PRESIDENT ARRIVED SIX HOURS LATE IN SPECIAL DC-8 WITH RETINUE OF ABOUT 60, AND ASKED HOST TO CANCEL STATE BANQUET SCHEDULED BE HELD THAT EVENING. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, DAHOMEANS AVENGED THEMSELVES BY SUBJECTING MOBUTU AND OTHER GUEST LATER THAT EVENING TO SIX HOURS OF NON-STOP CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS. THIS WAS DONE IN TRADITIONAL FASHION, WITHOUT OFFERING ANY REFRESHMENTS.

2. DESPITEHI SLOW START, MOBUTU WAS OVERALL SUCCESS. HIS MESSAGE OF "AUTHENTICITY" AND SELF-RELIANCE WAS RE-CONFIDENTIAL

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CEIVED WITH EMOTIONAL ENTHUSIASM, IF NOT MUCH UNDERSTAND-

ING. IN AIRPORT INTERVIEW ON ARRIVAL AND IN SPEECH AT STATE DINNER MAY 1, MOBUTU STRUCK RESPONSIVE CHORDS WITH FREQUENT CONDEMNATIONS OF COLONIALISM, NEOCOLONIALISM, AND FOREIGN IDEOLOGIES. SAID ZAIRE'S AUTHENTICITY REJECTS SOLUTIONS OF "RIGHT OR LEFT." ON POSITIVE SIDE, HE APPEALED FOR GREATER AFRICAN SELF-RELIANCE AND FOR PRIDE IN "NEGRO-AFRICAN" CULTURE. DAHOMEANS ECHOED SAME THEMES IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS WELCOMING THEIR GUEST.

3. ONLY QUASI-SPECIFICS TO COME OUT OF VISIT WERE: 1) MOBUTU'S REAFFIRMATION OF THREE MONTH OLD DAHO-ZAIRIAN AGREEMENT TO EXTEND AIR ZAIRE SERVICE TO COTONOU. MOBUTU SAID MODALTIES WOULD BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN COMPETENT AUTHORITIES; 2) MOBUTU ASSERTED THAT ZAIRE WOULD IMMEDIATELY REOPEN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH PORTUGAL IF GENERAL SPINOLA GRANTED COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE TO PORTUGUESE AFRICAN DEPENDENCIES.

COMMENT: VISIT WAS FOCUSED ON LARGER ROLE IN INTER-AFRICAN POLITICS FOR MOBUTU AND ON INTERNAL DAHOMEAN POLITICS FOR KEREKOU. ON BOTH COUNTS, IT WAS SUCCESSFUL. MOBUTU WAS TREATED AS AND ACTED LIKE AN AFRICAN STATESMAN OF CONTINENTAL STATURE. HIS ABILITY SPEAK COMMON LANGUAGE ENHANCED IMPACT THIS FIRST THRUST INTO FRANCO-PHONE WEST AFRICA. PRESUMABLY, ITINERARY WAS CHOSEN WITH THIS IN MIND. KEREKOU, FOR HIS PART, GAINED STATURE AND LEGITIMACY THROUGH ASSOCIATION WITH IMPORTANT AFRICAN LEADER. PRESIDENT'S SLIGHTLY SAGGING DOMESTIC PRESTIGE WAS THUS GIVEN HEALTHY BOOST. ALTHOUGH AMBITIOUS MIN INTERIOR AIKPE HOVERED ABOUT PERIPHERY, SPOTLIGHT WAS FOCUSED ON KEREKOU. ADDITIONAL FACTOR IN DAHOMEAN EYES WAS EMOTIONAL NEED TO KEEP UP WITH THEIR TOGOLESE NEIGHBORS WHO GOT MOBUTU'S FULL BARNUM AND BAILEY TREATMENT.

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## Message Attributes

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